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CATALOGUE

LÉON BAKST EXHIBITION

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CATALOGUE

OF AN

EXHIBITION OF DRAWINGS

BY

LÉON BAKST

FOR

BALLETS, PLAYS

AND

COSTUMES

THE FINE ART SOCIETY

148, NEW BOND STREET

JUNE AND JULY, 1913

No. 4708

PREFATORY NOTE.

LÉON BAKST.

Not so long ago people in this country were inquiring, "Who is Léon Bakst?" Then came the Russian Ballets, with their amazing advance in the art of the theatre. Each was a great impersonal synthesis such as Wagner dreamt of but never realised. It revealed that the "motive" was being introduced into decoration for the first time in the history of the scene, and that an important renascence in design was taking place. The Spectacles were a revelation even to advanced spirits. They restored to the theatre the rare function of inspiring the artist, offering a new vision of rhythmic form in line and colour, more vital, more direct, more intense and original than anything hitherto seen on the stage. In so doing they added a strong and urgently needed impulse to the decorative movement now sweeping over this country, both in and out of the theatre. The decorations of these Ballets were found to be the work of two Russian Schools, Moscow and St. Petersburg. Among the St. Petersburgers was M. Léon Bakst.

Here then was the desired answer. As the decorator of "Schéhérazade" and "Cléopâtre," M. Bakst stood revealed as one of the foremost of the reformers. Both Ballets were a magic of colour and a frenzy of movement, "Schéhérazade" being a superb piece of Oriental imaginative realism in which the arrangement of colour was alone sufficient to prove M. Bakst's genius as a decorator. It proved his feeling for rich Oriental harmonies, his sense of lyrical movement, and his power to express the sensual passions of the East. It was in fact a Ballet dedicated to the senses. "Cléopâtre" illustrated his mastery of chromatic combinations, and the use of the primary colours in endless harmonies, as well as his right understanding of the note of style to be found in coherence and uniformity. The whole was held together by a tremendous design or framework into which he poured characteristic Egyptian motives which were caught up and repeated in the movements, costumes, and even in the ornaments worn by the dancers. This dominant mood flowed uninterruptedly from beginning to end and thus his contribution to the Ballet was seen to be the essential line and colour of one great rhythmic movement. He provided, indeed, the connecting links of a whole series of rhythms. In a similar way he has quickened the soul of each subject he has treated, whether it be legend, fable or folk-story.

M. Bakst's aim, then, is to express rhythmic movement, supple, precise, and harmonious. He is one of the advanced decorators of to-day

who are occupied with drawing action, that is something seen and put down in a flash. It has been aptly said that he clothes a movement, not a mannikin. He uses the supple movements of the dancer's body and the fluid lines of her drapery symbolically. The flow of both indeed form a lyrical accompaniment to her inner passions. They roll with a luscious rhythm in harmony with the rhythm of her soul.

Suggestion is the spirit of art. M. Bakst is a master of suggestion. Through his Ballet drawings (or arrangements on paper) are not stage ideas of proportion, yet he has the power to impose on everyone concerned in carrying out his ideas, a coherent and uniform style, so that finally the desired stage proportions are attained. Thus his designs besides being pictorial and highly artistic are vital transcripts.

That M. Bakst is well equipped as a rhythmic decorator, is beyond doubt. In the first place he appears to be impelled by the inner necessity of creating something—that something being form. The necessity arises no doubt from his intense feeling for sex combined with an equally intense sense of undulating movement, impelling him to create rhythmic form. Added to this vision is a strong artistic temperament which perhaps reveals itself most markedly in his feeling for tactile values,—in M. Bakst's case, the values of the curves of femininity. He has an instinct for the value of certain curves of the female body,—seen in their relation to each other, and is conscious of the joy of their

working harmoniously together, acting and reacting on each other, rhythm within rhythm, in beauteous circles. He has rediscovered the luscious female line bequeathed by the early Orientals.

These discoveries are no doubt due to his training and thought. M. Bakst has been caught in the present culture movement and has selected one or two of the great creative epochs and extracted therefrom their distinguishing qualities as well as the fundamental principles which underlie and bind all such epochs together in unity.

M. Bakst's designs show a continuous advance in largeness of conception and treatment. Last year we were able to note his conception of vital colour in the "Dieu Bleu" ballet, his strength, his unity of design, his tremendous power of movement in Verhaeren's "Hélène de Sparte," his assimilation of the spirit of the Greek vase-painter in the costumes of "L'Après-midi d'un Faune." This year he gives new emphasis to his distinctive gifts. The charming series of "Fantaisies sur le Costume Moderne" shows us with what strange, romantic effect an original, creative talent may play at making modern fashion-plates. In the designs for "La Pisanelle" he delights us with more than the richness and glow of the drawings for "S. Sébastien": and he has found in the plot and characters of "Boris Godounow" a congenial opportunity for the display of those bright

colours and vivid contrasts which have contributed to so many of his triumphs.

Paris possesses a permanent collection of M. Bakst's Ballet drawings. If that city can so honour this decorator there is no reason why London should not do so also. He has something vital to give his English *confrères* and now that England is beginning to awaken to the importance of the æsthetic movement in the theatre it should commence the compilation of a national collection of Russian Ballet and Art Theatre drawings to which those artists who desire to serve the theatre may go for inspiration and guidance.

HUNTLEY CARTER.

CATALOGUE.

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60 1. SCHÉHÉRAZADE—THE CHIEF EUNUCH.

35 2. DAPHNIS AND CHLOE—SHEPHERDS.

30 3. DAPHNIS AND CHLOE—A SHEPHERDESS.

20 4. S. SEBASTIEN—A JEW.

30 5. PAPILLONS—COSTUME (MARRON).

30 6. PAPILLONS—VALET.

35 7. LE DIEU BLEU. GODDESS.

30 8. PAPILLONS—COSTUME.

25 9. PISANELLE—THE PRINCE OF TYRE (M. DE MAX).

30 10. PAPILLONS—COSTUME (JAUNE-VERT-BLANC).

30 11. DAPHNIS AND CHLOE—SHEPHERDESS.

12. LA SULTANE BLEUE.

55 13. PISANELLE. A GROUP OF THREE FIGURES. (LADIES OF THE COURT.)

30 14. Papillons—Costume (marron et vert).

30 15. Daphnis and Chloe—Likenion (Mme. Schollar.

20 16. Le Dieu Bleu. Sacred Tortoise.

30 17. Papillons—Costume.

20 18. Pisanelle—A Page.

25 19. Hungarian Dance.

30 20. Papillons—Valet.

55 21. Madame Rubinstein as S. Sebastien.

20 22. Nuit à Candie.

25 23. Le Dieu Bleu. Fakir.

20 24. Salome. Narrabot.

30 25. Pisanelle. A Neapolitan (1st Act).

40 26. Le Dieu Bleu. A Priest.

30 27. Pisanelle. Fernand Valar (1st Act).

30 28. Pisanelle. Musician (3rd Act).

140 29. Scenery of the Opera Boris Godounow.

35 30. Le Dieu Bleu. A Rajah.

35 31. Le Dieu Bleu. Sacrificial Attendant.

30 32. Pisanelle. Badin Fiesque (1st Act).

40 33. Schéhérazade. A Youth.

40 34. Daphnis et Chloe—A Shepherd.

35 35. Le Dieu Bleu. Priest.

30 36. Pisanelle. Master Anselm, the Surgeon (1st Act).

40 37. Le Dieu Bleu. Woman of the People

160 38. Scenery of Prologue of Pisanelle.

40 39. Le Dieu Bleu. Sacrificial Attendant.

40 40. Le Dieu Bleu. A Man of the Crowd.

30 41. Pisanelle. The Notary (1st Act).

30 42. Boris Godounow—A Pole.

40 43. Schéhérazade. Nègre Diamant.

30 44. Boris Godounow—A Pole.

55 45. PISANELLE. A GROUP OF THREE FIGURES. (A BULGARIAN ARCHER, THE PRINCE OF ANTIOCH, A JUDGE.)

45 46. PISANELLE. SPANISH ARAB (1ST ACT).

150 47. SKETCH FOR THE SCENERY OF DAPHNIS ET CHLOE.

35 48. LE DIEU BLEU. A BAYADÈRE.

30 49. PISANELLE. A SERVING-MAN (3RD ACT).

55 50. PISANELLE. A GROUP OF THREE FIGURES. (A KNIGHT, A BAILLIE, THE MARSHAL OF THE HOSPITAL.)

55 51. BORIS GODOUNOW—POLISH LADIES. THREE DESIGNS.

25 52. PISANELLE. A POOR CLARE (2ND ACT).

30 53. BORIS GODOUNOW—A POLE.

30 54. BORIS GODOUNOW—A POLE.

65 55. JEUX—COSTUMES FOR M. NIJINSKY, MME. KARŚAVINA AND MME. SCHOLLAR.

110 56. DAPHNIS AND CHLOE—SHEPHERDESSES.

000 57. TERROR ANTIQUUS.

This picture for which the artist made numerous studies in Greece and Crete (Candia) was finished in 1910, and won the Gold Medal at the International Exhibition at Brussels in 1911. first

The artist himself supplies a note of his motive in painting this picture. He has endeavoured to realise a vast landscape groaning beneath the terror of a cataclysm of nature. It may be Atlantis sinking beneath the waves, or Greece herself (as the broad territory depicted would suggest) may be about to be engulfed.

It is an upheaval that threatens animate and inanimate nature alike. The sea surges high, scattering the vessels and breaking them into fragments: the waves overwhelm harbours, fortresses and towns. The people, like frightened sheep, pour from their houses and flee to temples and open spaces, fling themselves prostrate at the feet of the statues of heroes and demigods, and implore the mercy of Zeus, the Lord of Heaven. The lightning, ever a terrifying phenomenon to the ancients, streams in a single flash from end to end of the peninsula, rending the threatening gloom and revealing the bare structure of the rocks—solitary heights, crowned with olive and laurel—mysterious caverns in which the wind-driven waves boil and foam. The universe seems ready to melt into the sea, and the sea itself hungry to engulf all living things.

In the midst of this scene of desolation and disaster rises the calm, triumphant image of Aphrodite—Isis. On her lips plays a smile, half-cruelty, half-enigma: to her breast she presses the symbol of her divinity—a dove. She is the 'eternal feminine': and to the 'eternal feminine' she joins the eternal world of nature. Terror Antiquus is a vision of the soul of the primitive Greek aghast in the face of the terrifying cataclysm of nature

30 58. Boris Godounow—A Pole.

55 59. Projet de Décoration murale dans le style Véronese.

25 60. Scenery of Pisanelle (2nd Act). (Black and White.)

55 61. Scenery of Pisanelle (2nd Act).

30 62. Salome. Warder and Executioner.

25 63. Pisanelle. Maset de Capone (1st Act).

25 64. Pisanelle. A Fruit-bearer (3rd Act).

40 65. Le Dieu Bleu. Woman with an Offering.

50 66. Pisanelle. Standard Bearer, Jan Corner, Catarin Malipier (1st Act).

40 67. Le Dieu Bleu. Young Prince.

30 68. Scenery of Pisanelle (1st Act). (Pencil.)

130 69. Hélène de Sparte—Scenery of 4th Act.

40 70. Daphnis and Chloe—Brigands.

25 71. Les fées Parisiennes.

50 72. PISANELLE. A GROUP OF THREE FIGURES. (A SERVING-MAN, THE LORD OF BARNT, THE LORD OF EDESSA.)

150 73. SCHÉHÉRAZADE. ALMÉE.

40 74. SCHÉHÉRAZADE. SHAH (M. ADOLF BOLM).

30 75. PISANELLE. THE MINSTREL (PROLOGUE).

60 76. MOSES ON MOUNT SINAI.

30 77. BORIS GODOUNOW—A POLISH LADY AND MARINA.

55 78. SCENERY OF PISANELLE (1ST ACT).

40 79. LANDSCAPE AT CORFU.

30 80. PISANELLE. MUSICIAN (3RD ACT).

50 81. PISANELLE. A GROUP OF THREE FIGURES. (A NEGRO SERVANT, A SENESCHAL, A CUP-BEARER.)

30 82. LE DIEU BLEU. HERB BEARER.

25 83. FANTAISIE DÉCORATIVE.

40 84. LE DIEU BLEU. THE HIGH PRIEST.

25 85. Le Dieu Bleu. Monster.

160 86. Hélène de Sparte—A Group of Thirteen Figures (Shepherds, Messengers, and Peasants).

40 87. Scenery for the Opera "The Pythagoreans."

35 88. Le Dieu Bleu. A Fakir.

30 89. Pisanelle. The Prince of Galilee (Prologue).

60 90. Scenery of Pisanelle (3rd Act).

50 91. Pisanelle. Costumes for Latin Bishop, Greek Bishop and Almoner (1st dress) (Prologue).

35 92. Pisanelle. The Chamberlain (Prolcgue).

40 93. Le Dieu Bleu. Bayadère.

40 94. Schéhérazade. Le Fiancé.

30 95. Daphnis and Chloe—A Shepherd.

20 96. Design for Mural Painting.

97. Crépuscule d'Automne.

98. Drawing.

99. Fantaisie sur le Costume Moderne—Niké. *Carried out by Paquin.*

100. Daphnis and Chloe—Darcon (M. Bolm).

101. Fantaisie sur le Costume Moderne—Atalante. *Carried out by Paquin.*

102. Fantaisie sur le Costume Moderne—Deauville. *Carried out by Paquin.*

103. Fantaisie sur le Costume Moderne—Alcyoné. *Carried out by Paquin.*

104. Pisanelle. A Group of Three Figures. (Oriour la Devine, Blancheflor, Simonette la Lombarde.)

105. Sketch for the Scenery of "Jeux."

106. Le Dieu Bleu. Beggar.

107. Le Dieu Bleu. A Man of the Crowd.

50 108. Fantaisie sur le Costume Moderne—Aglaê. *Carried out by Paquin.*

50 109. Boris Godounow. Polish Ladies. Three designs for Costumes.

50 110. Fantaisie sur le Costume Moderne—Dioné. *Carried out by Paquin.*

50 111. Fantaisie sur le Costume Moderne—Dryade. *Carried out by Paquin.*

50 112. Fantaisie sur le Costume Moderne—Philomèle. *Carried out by Paquin.*

25 113. Pisanelle—A Pisan.

30 114. Daphnis and Chloe—A Shepherd.

35 115. Le Dieu Bleu. Beggarwoman.

25 116. Daphnis and Chloe—Shepherdess.

30 117. Salome—Herod (M. de Max).

25 118. Daphnis and Chloe—Chloe (Mme. Karsavina).

25 119. PISANELLE. NEGRO (3RD ACT)..

25 120. LE DIEU BLEU. FAKIR.

95 121. SKETCH FOR THE SCENERY OF "JEUX."

35 122. DAPHNIS AND CHLOE—BRIGANDS.

20 123. HÉLÈNE DE SPARTE. YOUTH.

20 124. DAPHNIS AND CHLOE—A BRIGAND BOY.

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,, 27.	BALLET.	Scheherazade. L'Après-midi d'un Faune. Jeux. Les Sylphides.
,, 30.	BALLET.	Petrouchka. La Tragédie de Salome. Prince Igor.
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,, 4.	BALLET.	Narcisse. La Tragédie de Salome. Carnaval.
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